



***PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE***
March 20, 2019

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent 100% of Connecticut's population.

H.B. 7192 “An Act Concerning Municipal and Regional Opportunities and Efficiencies.”

Encouraging Regional Cooperation for Greater Governmental Efficiency

CCM would like to thank the Governor and Planning and Development Committee for providing a forum to discuss municipal and regional opportunities and efficiencies. We appreciate the opportunity to be a part of this conversation to begin to tackle the unsustainable policies of the past and to provide for common sense solutions to encourage municipal service sharing and regional efficiencies.

CCM released a report in 2017, *“This Report is Different”* that outlines a new path forward for towns and cities. CCM's State and Local Partnership Panel, which included 21 municipal leaders representing cities, suburban and rural communities, Republicans and Democrats offered recommendations that would enable towns and cities to save money, increase regional collaboration and diversify their revenue streams – including the opportunity to encourage service sharing. The report highlights a new way forward for the state and its relationship with its municipalities. It stresses the need to change the paradigm in order to help towns and cities become more self-reliant and to chart a sustainable path to future growth and prosperity.

CCM appreciates that H.B. 7192 includes a few of our legislative program items born from our report:

- Creating a new Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) in order to facilitate the implementation of shared services.
- Allowing towns and cities to override their charters to share or consolidate services.
- Reforms the amount of inspections fire marshals must perform to achieve compliance.

The proposal also seeks to consolidate Public Service Answering Points (PSAPs), creates the Commission on Shared School Services, restructures the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) into a more policy oriented advisory group and it proposes to consolidate tax collection and assessment services.



While CCM generally supports the majority of the proposals within the bill, we believe that opportunities should be provided in sections 7-9 for the appointment of municipal officials to sit on the Commission on Shared School Services created under said sections. As drafted, these sections do not provide municipal officials a seat at the table and it is our view that as payers, local government officials should be provided an opportunity for input and participation.

Additionally, we have concerns around sections 22 – 24 that promote the consolidation of public service answering points (PSAPs).

These sections would mandate the consolidation of municipal public safety answering points into regional or multi-town public safety answering points (PSAPs). CCM appreciates the intent of these sections – as regionalization occurs on a daily basis among many facets of local government and should be encouraged – however, we have concerns regarding the approach taken, as it would be the proverbial stick looming over already strained local budgets.

Instead, CCM supports S.B. 1082, which is also before you today, as it would, among other things, require the Division of State-Wide Emergency Telecommunications (DSET) to develop incentives for the regionalization of public safety answering points (PSAPs). CCM strives for more efficient means to operate local governments however, local officials equally require the option to determine how best to manage those communities. Meaningful recommendations or incentives need to help lay a path for successful consolidation of PSAPs to occur.

Governments stand at a crossroads. For over a decade, local governments in the state benefited from a strong economy and stable revenues. This stability depended crucially on the local property tax and reliable and adequate state aid. The lack of diversity in revenue sources and uncertainty at the state level are now eroding the capacity of local governments to meet their obligations to the public. As a state with relatively high property taxes, the ability of local governments to respond to these challenges by simply raising the property tax rates is extremely limited.

Communities must be given the flexibility to use alternative revenue sources to meet pressing financial needs and/or grant property tax relief. They need policy changes that would result in greater revenue flexibility at the local level and generally less reliance on state aid which will go a long way towards realizing our shared goal of strengthening municipalities to strengthen our state.



If you have any questions, please contact Donna Hamzy Carroccia, Advocacy Manager of CCM at dhamzy@ccm-ct.org or (203) 843-0705.